First Voice & J-Town Task Force

PRESENT

J-TOWN CULTURE BEARERS

PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE • INFINITY

INFINITY: HANABI

MASARU KOGA & FRIENDS

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 3:30PM

JCCCNC, 1840 Sutter Street

THE PRESENT: PACIFIC BRIDGE

AKIRA TANA & OTONOWA

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 8:30PM

Suite 520, Japantown East Mall

THE PAST: MEMORIES, MOVIES & MUSIC

MARK IZU & FRIENDS

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 3:30PM

Suite 520, Japantown East Mall

THE FUTURE: HAPA VOICES

SF BATCO

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 4:00PM

JCCCNC, 1840 Sutter Street

Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival 2019

First Voice & J-Town Task Force

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J-TOWN CULTURE BEARERS

PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE • INFINITY

Dear Friends,

This year, Mark and I want to uplift our culture bearers. In a world of change, it is our culture bearers* who carry on. We are so proud of presenting these amazing artists at the 52nd Sakuramatsuri!

I think about my grandfather, Chojiro Aoki, who came here as a young man in the 1890's, sent as an emissary of the Meiji government to establish the first Japanese Settlement in America. It's 2019 and we're still here in Japantown, today. Amazing!

And who bears witness to this resilience? Who remembers and passes forward our story? Who uplifts our hearts with song so we can carry on? The Culture Bearers. There are hundreds of culture bearers here at Cherry Blossom Festival, giving their hearts after weeks of preparation. And all of us are culture bearers, really. So stand tall, be proud of our sweet, sweet J-town – and I'm talking to YOU! You don't have to be Japanese. If J-town is in your heart, you are part of it.

The artists in the J-town Culture Bearer series understand their responsibility to beloved community. They know they are fulfilling a sacred trust. Their musical offerings are food for the soul.

So Celebrate our ancestors, Celebrate our future, Celebrate our Culture Bearers!

— BRENDA & MARK

Sakuramatsuri, San Francisco 2019

Brenda Wong Aoki's grandfather, Chojiro Peter Aoki, was one of the founders of Japantown in 1897.

* **Culture bearer.**
(ANTHROPOLOGY)

any individual, especially a migrant, who carries, and thus diffuses, **cultural** values and traits between societies. The role of **culture bearers** is particularly important within those **cultures** undergoing transition or experiencing threat from outside the **culture**.

FIRST VOICE - Brenda Wong Aoki & Mark Izu

FIRST VOICE creates, presents and produces, the stories and music of people living between worlds. Passionate about impacting America culture, our mission emphasizes "personal experience" or "voice" emanating from a deeply rooted community as essential to the authentic representation of the people of the United States. Through our pursuit of this distinct purpose, founders Brenda Wong Aoki and Mark Izu have contributed to Asian American cultural heritage since 1976.

FIRST VOICE creates original work that incorporates Asian theatre (particularly Japanese) musical and spoken word traditions into indigenous American art forms like jazz and contemporary performance art. Our work is premiered in San Francisco, then presented locally and toured nationally. We are unique in the range of work we do which includes: symphonic work, plays, storytelling, jazz ensemble, chamber music, large scale pageant performances with traditional and contemporary dancers, solo monodramas, live performance to film and interactive performance with installation artworks. We collaborate not only across disciplines but also across cultures. Full-length main stage performances usually revolve around issues of place, home, family and survival. *Aunt Lily's Flower Book: 100 Years of Legalized Racism* (2018) *Uncle Gunjiro's Girl Friend* (1998, 2016); *Suite J-Town* (2015). We've enjoyed collaboration with artists from Japan, *MU*, (2013), *Legend of Morning Glory* (2008), Hong Kong - *Kuan-Yin: Our Lady of Compassion* (2002), Hawaii treasure Keola Beamer (2001), Basque musician Kepa Junpera (2010), Karuk Tribal elders Julian Lang and Lyn Risling - *Hibakusha* (1995), musicians and storytellers from the Cherokee nation - *Fire in Heaven* (2003), Afro-Peruvian, Mayan, Indian & Korean dancers - *Return of the Sun* (2009) Maestro Kent Nagano, Opera Lyon & Berkeley Symphony - *Mermaid* (1997) and African-American civil rights poet & actor John O'Neal - *Ballad of the Bones* (1999).

Our work is at the Library of Congress and will be archived at the Smithsonian Institution. We are currently working on two commissions, *The Draupadi Project* (2020) with Shadow Light and Gamelan Sekar Jaya 2020 and of the Hewlett 50 Arts Commission to create *J-town, Chinatown: OurTown* with the Center for Asian American Media in 2021.

http://www.firstvoice.org/

Your generous donation is tax deductible and means the world to us.
Please make checks payable to: **First Voice** 43 Parsons St., San Francisco, CA 94118

INFINITY: HANABI

MASARU KOGA & FRIENDS

Saturday, April 13, 3:30pm
JCCCNC, 1840 Sutter Street
San Francisco

MASARU KOGA, lead artist, flutist and saxophonist is originally from Japan. He has been an integral part of San Francisco's creative music scene. Known for his cross-cultural musical palette and innovative approach, awarded "Best Latin Jazz Flutist", Koga recently released his CD, *Hanabi*.

MASARU KOGA, flute, saxophone
JIMMY BIALA, percussion
JOHN-CARLOS PEREA, electric bass
AMIKAEYLA GASTON, percussion, vocals

PRODUCTION

Brenda Wong Aoki, Co-curator/Producer/Artistic Director, *J-Town Culture Bearers*
Mark Izu, Co-curator/Producer & Artist
Steve Nakajo, Producer
Andi Wong, Production Coordinator
Marissa Bergmann, First Voice Line Producer, Photography
Ryan Takemiya, Stage Manager
Timmy Leong, Sound and Lights
Max Toshiro Loubet, Videographer
Nikki Yoshikawa, **Belinda Martin**, Tickets

J-Town Culture Bearers support/volunteers: San Francisco Black Fire Fighters Association, SF Fire Department, Andrew Marks, John Smith, Nick Song, Eldren Jones Jr., Nehemiah Winston, Thaddeus Wiltz, Marcus Spencer; Chris Wong, Megan Wong and Patrick Wu.

Hanabi (flower fire)
Fire blossoms remind us of the fleetingness of life
And the connection between all living beings

- MASARU KOGA

MASARU KOGA

San Francisco based multi-instrumentalist Masaru Koga developed his worldview at an early age. Soon after his birth in Chiba Japan, his family relocated to the US due to his father's work, and spent this adolescent years moving around multiple times. By the time he graduated high school, he had lived in three different countries and nine different cities. With an international background, it was fitting that he would find himself at San Jose State University to pursue music in the Improvised Music Studies, where he intensively studied and explored musical tradition from around the world. With the guidance from his mentors including Dwight Cannon, Dr. Hafez Modirzadeh, Dr. royal hartigan, Dan Sabanovich, Baomi Butts, and Joe Hodge. Masaru earned his BA in IMS in 1995.

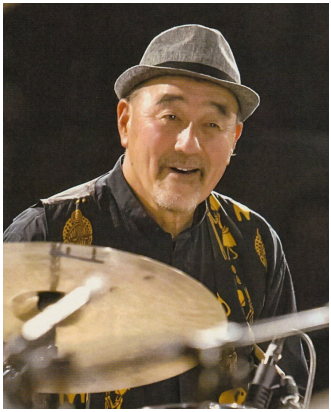
Fueled with a passion for cross-cultural experience, Masaru started to incorporate the Japanese shakuhachi into his music, and began his apprenticeship with master shakuhachi artist Masayuki Koga. In addition to woodwinds, Masaru fell in love with the sound of Brazilian Samba drumming and spent several years studying and playing within the rich Brazilian Samba community in the bay area. From 2006 to 2011 he served as the director for SambAsia San Francisco, an award winning Samba group originally founded by Jimmy Biala. Masaru has had the privilage of working with artists such as Akira Tana, Anthony Brown, Mark Izu, Fred Ho, Wayne Wallace, Gail Dobson, Kenny Endo, and Kat Parra, as well as his mentors Hafez Modirzadeh and royal hartigan. In addition to performing, Masaru is an experienced educator. Aside from his regular private instruction, he has taught at California Jazz Conservatory, and also conducted workshops domestically and internationally. In 2010, he received "The Latin Jazz Corner Best of 2010 Awards" in the "Latin Jazz Flautist of the Year" category for his performance on Kat Parra's album "Dos Amantes". In 2013 he worked as a musical director for a three-week off-Broadway run of Fred Ho's critically acclaimed theater work *Deadly She-Wolf Assassin At Armageddon!* in New York City, in which he conducted and performed as the leader of the Afro-Asian Music Ensemble.

Masaru's sound encompasses the many cultural traditions he's been touched by, and the worldview developed though diverse life experiences. He aims to create music that respects traditions and goes beyond styles and idioms, and ultimately help diminish all other forms of social boundaries.

https://www.maskoga.com/

Pick up your FREE J-Town Culture Bearer button >

FIRST VOICE thanks you for being a J-Town Culture Bearer!



THE PRESENT: PACIFIC BRIDGE

AKIRA TANA & OTONOWA

Saturday, April 13, 8:30pm
Suite 520, Japantown East Mall
San Francisco

Since the 2011 earthquake/tsunami in Tohoku, Bay Area native **AKIRA TANA** has made annual pilgrimages to Japan with the group under his leadership **OTONOWA**, creating music directly from the crucible of disaster, building a bridge between Nikkei and Japanese musicians that inspires and heals.

AKIRA TANA, percussion
MASARU KOGA, reeds/percussion
NORIYUKI KEN OKADA, bass
BEN STOLOROW, keyboard

Community Reception for **OTONOWA**

PRODUCTION

Brenda Wong Aoki, Co-curator/Producer/Artistic Director, *J-Town Culture Bearers*
Mark Izu, Co-curator/Producer & Artist
Steve Nakajo, Producer
Andi Wong, Production Coordinator
Marissa Bergmann, First Voice Line Producer, Photography
Ryan Takemiya, Stage Manager
Timmy Leong, Sound and Lights
Max Toshiro Loubet, Videographer
Nikki Yoshikawa, Lauren Nosaka, Kenny Watanabe, Tickets/Reception

J-Town Culture Bearers support/volunteers: San Francisco Black Fire Fighters Association, SF Fire Department, Andrew Marks, John Smith, Jason Scheuman, Alex Rashdan, Edwin Loeza, Elton Rangle, Paolo Lopez, Christian Rozo, Chris Wong, Megan Wong and Patrick Wu.

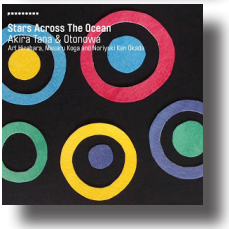
AKIRA TANA

Born and raised in California, Akira Tana earned degrees from Harvard University and the New England Conservatory of Music. Tana has worked with Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, Zoot Sims, Hubert Laws, Milt Jackson, Jim Hall, Art Farmer, The Paul Winter Consort, Paquito D'Rivera, James Moody, J.J. Johnson, Lena Horne, The Manhattan Transfer, Ruth Brown, Charles Aznavour, Maurice Hines, and Van Dyke Parks. He has appeared on over 150 recordings.

Tana co-led a quintet with the bassist, Rufus Reid called TanaReid, has five releases, "Yours and Mine" and "Passing Thoughts," on Concord Records and "Blue Motion" and "Looking Forward,"and "Back to Front," on Evidence Music. On Sons of Sound, Akira has two releases as a leader, "Moon Over the World" and "Secret Agent Men." The third US release on Sons of Sound as a leader is a project by the Secret Agent Men Band playing themes from the movies of James Bond, entitled "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang," featuring the vocalist, Annie Sellick. Just released in Japan is a project entitled "JAZZaNOVA," on Vega Records that features the vocalists, Claudio Amaral, Claudia Villela, Jackie Ryan, Carla Helmbrecht, and Sandy Cressman. Guest artists include Branford Marsalis and Arturo Sandoval.

"Otonowa" features jazz interpretations of Japanese folk and pop melodies that date as far back as the 1800's. This group just completed a tour of Tohoku performing and teaching for communites still rebuilding from the Earthquake/ Tsunamai of 2011. An active teacher and clinician, Tana has taught at Rutgers University, Queens College, Jersey City State College, New York University, and is currently on the faculty at San Francisco State University and the Jazz Conservatory of California in Berkeley, California.

https://www.akiratana.com/



COMMUNITY RECEPTION FOR
OTONOWA

Immediately following this performance, please stay for a J-TOWN CULTURE BEARERS story sharing about Japanese Americans & the people of Tohoku and reception hosted by J-TOWN TASK FORCE & FIRST VOICE.

To learn more about Akira Tana & OTONOWA, please visit **http://www.otonowa-usa.com/**

THE PAST: MEMORIES, MOVIES & MUSIC
MARK IZU & FRIENDS

Sunday, April 14, 3:30pm
Suite 520, Japantown East Mall
San Francisco

Emmy Award winning composer **MARK IZU** and musicians perform live to rarely seen Japanese American Home Movies from the 1930's.

MARK IZU, electric bass
GEORGE YAMASAKI, piano
SHOKO HIKAGE, koto
MASARU KOGA, reeds/percussion

with **BRENDA WONG AOKI**, **KAI KANE AOKI IZU**, **MARISSA IZU BERGMANN**

Immediately following this performance, we invite you to stay and share memories at a reception hosted by J-TOWN TASK FORCE & FIRST VOICE, with special guest **STEPHEN GONG**, Executive Director, Center for Asian American Media (CAAM).

PRODUCTION

Brenda Wong Aoki, Co-curator/Producer/Artistic Director, *J-Town Culture Bearers*
Mark Izu, Co-curator/Producer & Artist
Steve Nakajo, Producer
Andi Wong, Production Coordinator
Marissa Bergmann, First Voice Line Producer, Photography
Ryan Takemiya, Stage Manager
Timmy Leong, Sound and Lights
Max Toshiro Loubet, Videographer
Nikki Yoshikawa, **Sheryl Koga**, Tickets/Reception

J-Town Culture Bearers support/volunteers: San Francisco Black Fire Fighters Association, SF Fire Department, Andrew Marks, Josestevan Villalobos, Jason Scheuman, Alex Rashdan, Edwin Loeza, Paolo Lopez, Dexter Best, Antonio Perez Changer, DiamUnd, Chris Wong.

BRENDA WONG AOKI's J-TOWN, CHINATOWN, OUR TOWN
(working title), commissioned by **The Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)** with funding from a **Hewlett Foundation 50 Arts Commission** is a multi-disciplinary work rooted in the artist's 121-year family history in San Francisco. This new work based on true stories about people and places from her life and that of her Chinese- and Japanese-American family's 121-year history in San Francisco, will premiere at the Herbst Theater as part of CAAMFest in 2021. For more information: **www.firstvoice.org**

MARK IZU

Composer, producer and bandleader Mark Izu has fused the traditional music of Asia with African- American improvisation. Izu plays acoustic bass as well as several traditional Asian instruments such as the *sheng* (Chinese multi-reed instrument) and *sho* (Japanese multi-reed instrument).

As the Artistic Director of the Asian American Jazz Festival for 15 years, Izu has gained national and international attention for developing a new musical genre, Asian American Jazz, and has performed with artists such as James Newton, Steve Lacy, Zakir Hussain, Kent Nagano, George Lewis, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Brown and Jon Jang. Recently Izu has been inducted into the Grove Dictionary of Music as a composer and founder of Asian American Jazz.

Izu has composed scores for film, live music concerts and theater. In 2009 Izu won an Emmy® Award for Outstanding Music for his score in *Bolinao 52*. His film scores include Steven Okazaki's Academy® award-winning *Days of Waiting*; Emmy-winning documentary, *Return to the Valley*; and a new score for the DVD release of Sessue Hayakawa's 1909 masterpiece, *The Dragon Painter* (Milestones DVD - 2007). His theater scores have been performed at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and Sundance Festival and he was awarded a Drama-logue Award for Best Original Music & two Indie Awards for best CD.

Izu's other awards include Meet the Composer, Gerbode Composer Commission, Asian Business League Artist Award, Rockefeller MAP, National Endowment for the Arts, and San Francisco Arts Commission. Izu was a founding faculty member of Stanford's Institute of Diversity for the Arts in 2002. In 2007 he received the US/Japan Creative Arts Fellowship to Japan sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bunkacho.

Do you have home movies that show daily life and memorable events as lived for Asian American families?

The Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)
is collecting and digitizing these videos to preserve and share them – and the stories they tell — to a broad public.

CAAM will digitize personal home movie collections in exchange for the donation of the electronic copy to be uploaded to the Internet Archive. After digitization, the original collection will be returned along with a DVD copy. Participating in CAAM's *Memories to Light* helps us accomplish our mission of preserving Asian American history!

Questions? Email us at memoriestolight@caamedia.org.

First Voice & J-Town Task Force

PRESENT

J-TOWN CULTURE BEARERS

THE FUTURE: HAPA VOICES

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA THEATER COMPANY (BATCO)

Saturday, April 20, 4:00pm, JCCCNC

JAMIE YUEN-SHORE, Director
OTHELLO JEFFERSON, Music Director
CHRISTINE CHUNG, Choreographer

THE PERFORMERS

SINGERS

Maya Vilaplana
Marissa Bergmann
Jojo Thompson
Shantelle Williams
Justin Marquez
Tosh Harris Santiago
Quinn Collaço
Marcelo Pereira

DANCERS

Nina Wu
Isa Musni
Andy Nguyen
Tayna Gonzalez Rivera
Julie Ni

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

I, Too, Sing America
Beehive
Wanting Memories
Women
First Mango
Accents
Hip Hop
Once Barbie Chang Worked
Riding the subway is an adventure
Three Thousand Lost Kisses
Komorebi
To a Dark Girl
I, Too, Sing America: II

THE FUTURE: HAPA VOICES

SF BATCO

Saturday, April 20, 4:00pm
JCCCNC, 1840 Sutter St.
San Francisco

Singers, dancers and musicians from **SFBATCO** perform excerpts from their sold-out Izzie-nominated musical *I, Too, Sing America*.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA THEATER COMPANY (BATCO)

JAMIE YUEN-SHORE, Director
OTHELLO JEFFERSON, Music Director, Composer
MARCELO PERIERA, Artistic Director
CLAUDIO SILVA, Production Manager

PRODUCTION

Brenda Wong Aoki, Co-curator/Producer/Artistic Director, *J-Town Culture Bearers*
Mark Izu, Co-curator/Producer & Artist
Steve Nakajo, Producer
Andi Wong, Production Coordinator
Marissa Bergmann, First Voice Line Producer, Photography
Timmy Leong, Sound and Lights
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Nikki Yoshikawa, Lauren Nosaka, Tickets

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CULTURE BEARERS

'carry' culture forward to new people, next generations, and to exchanges with other cultures. Some say that Storytellers are Culture Bearers, because they transmit cultures, sometimes from their own ethnic heritage and sometimes from others.

Button design by Marissa Bergmann

JAMIE YUEN-SHORE

Jamie Yuen-Shore is currently the education fellow at Berkeley Repertory Theater. She was recently a Fullbright English teaching assistant in Montevideo, Uraguay, where she taught English and musical Theatre to High School Students. She graduated from Stanford University with a B.A. in Urban Studies and an M.A. in Sociology. Jamie has previously worked at the Stanford Arts Institute, The Anderson Collection at Stanford University, Creative Artists Agency, SHN and the Public Theatre. She directed and co-produced BATCO's tribute to Danny Duncan in 2013.

OTHELLO JEFFERSON

Musical Director, Composer, and Concept Creator of "I, TOO, SING AMERICA," Othello Jefferson is a native of San Francisco. Jefferson holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a music teaching credential from San Francisco State university. An award-winning Choir Director while teaching at San Francisco's Lowell High School for ten years, he is currently the Choir Director at Redwood City's Sequoia High School and Minister of Music for the First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, in San Francisco as well as the Western Episcopal District. Othello received a Gospel Music Award from San Francisco's Academy of Gospel and a Negro Spirituals Heritage Keepers Award from the Friends of Negro Spirituals in Oakland. He conceived the idea to put poems by poets of color to music while reading to his daughters, "I, Too, Sing America" an anthology that includes poems from three decades of black writers.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA THEATER COMPANY

BATCO unites artists and audiences through live theatre that is reflective of the authentic perspectives and history of the San Francisco Bay Area. Our non-profit organization supports artists through creative development, full productions, and mentorships that aspire to engage a new generation of live theater supporters.

For more information, visit **http://www.sfbatco.org/**

Be a J-TOWN CULTURE BEARER!

By attending this live performance, you are supporting the next generation of J-TOWN artists. Be sure to pick up your FREE J-Town Culture Bearer button and wear it proudly!

Share your favorite photos of J-TOWN places and memories using the hashtag #jtownculturebearer
Thank you for being a J-Town Culture Bearer!

THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
mission is to preserve and develop Japantown, strengthen the ethnic diversity, and create an atmosphere of safety, beauty, vitality, and prosperity.

Japantown Task Force, Inc. was created in 2001 in order to continue the work of the previous 50-member Japantown Planning, Preservation, and Development Task Force organization. There are only three remaining Japantowns left in the U.S., all located in the state of California - San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles. San Francisco's Japantown holds a long history dating back to the time Japanese immigrants first set foot onto the mainland in 1860 through redevelopment in the 1960s, and up to the present day. The community has become diverse, yet still holds on to the Japanese culture as seen through the annual Cherry Blossom Festival, the Nihonmachi Street Fair, Bon Odori and Oshogatsu (New Year's) activities. Japantown Task Force, Inc. continues to work on revitalizing and preserving Japantown, a community of culture, tradition, and history. For more information, visit: **https://www.japantowntaskforce.org/**

First Voice & The J-Town Task Force would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support of the J-Town Culture Bearers Performance Series.

San Francisco Japantown Foundation
San Francisco Grants for the Arts
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation
Invest in Neighborhoods San Francisco

FIRST VOICE would like to express our deepest gratitute to the following individuals for their invaluable support of the **J-TOWN CULTURE BEARERS** performance series:

Sandy Mori, President, Board of Directors, Japantown Task Force
Steve Nakajo, Executive Director, Japantown Task Force
Lauren Nosaka, Administrative Manager, Japantown Task Force
Nikki Yoshikawa, Community Relations Director, Japantown Task Force
Max Toshiro Loubet, Intern, Japantown Task Force
Richard Hashimoto, President, Japantown Merchants Association
Grace Horikiri, Executive Director, Japantown Community Benefit District
Kiyomi Takeda, Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
Greg Vilora, Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
Daniel F. Byron II, Director of Asset Management, 3D Investments
Sheron Chiu, Mall Manager, Japantown Center